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Evangelism Conf. '05 just weeks away

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The 2005 Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference is growing again with the addition of a Senior Adult Track to go along with the Men's and Women's Tracks.

S.A. "Sonny" Adkins, director of evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), said he believes the program for the 2005 conference, which will take place January 24-25 at Temple Church West Campus in Hattiesburg, is one of the best ever assembled.

"We will be meeting on Temple Church's beautiful West Campus and hearing from some of the best preachers we have today," Adkins said.

The new, one-day Senior Track will begin at 8:30 a.m. on January 24 and adjourn at 11:45 a.m. The Senior Track will feature a rally with music by Paid in Full, a trio from New Albany, and a message from Jim Futral, MBCB executive director-treasurer. Available seminars will include:

- Servanthood Evangelism for Seniors, led by Glenn Shows, consultant in the MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry Department.

- Share Jesus Without Fear, led by Marcus Peagler, MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry Director.

- Golden Opportunities For Seniors, led by Kay Cassibry, Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union Director.

- Sunday School as an Outreach for Seniors, led by John Clendenning, consultant in the MBCB Sunday School Department.

The first session of the Men's Track will begin at 1:30 p.m. on January 24 and conclude at 4:30 p.m. The first session will include messages by Dean Register, Temple Church pastor; David Uth, senior pastor of First Church, West Monroe, La; and Stan Buckley, pastor of First Church, Jackson.

First session music will be provided by Matt Rouse, associate minister of music and orchestra director at First Church, Jackson, and Paid in Full.

The second session of the Men's Track will begin at 6:30 p.m. on January 24 and concludes at 8:30 p.m.

David Uth and Laurel Ed Young, pastor of Second Church, Houston, Texas, will preach.

Second session music will be provided by Paul Koonce, worship pastor at Temple Church, and the Temple Church Celebration Choir and Orchestra.



Buckley



Kelly



Rouse



Paid In Full

The third session of the Men's Track will begin at 9 a.m. on January 25 and conclude at noon.

O.S. Hawkins, president of the Guidestone (former the Annuity Board) in Dallas will deliver a message, along with Robert Smith, professor of preaching at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. Ken Lyle, MBCB mission strategy consultant, will deliver a presentation on the What Now, Mississippi? missions strategy.

Third session music will be provided by Ronnie Cottingham, music evangelist from Lucedale, and Paid in Full.

The fourth and final session of the Men's Track will begin at 2 p.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. O.S. Hawkins and Robert Smith will deliver the messages.

Music will be provided by Bernie Parker, minister of music at First Church, Columbia, and Paid in Full.

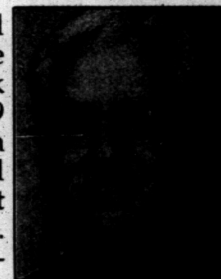
The first session of the Women's Track will begin on January 24 at 1:30 p.m. and conclude at 5 p.m.

Women's Track participants are encouraged to join the Men's Track participants for a ple-

anary second session at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 24.

The third session of the Women's Track will begin at 9 a.m. on January 25 and conclude at 1:30 p.m.

The fourth session will begin at 1:30 p.m. Featured speaker for the Women's Track will be Rhonda Kelley, professor of



Koonce



Register



Cottingham



Smith



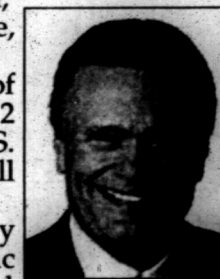
Fisk



Hawkins



Uth



Young



Parker



Lyle

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Directions

Just for the Record

Sunday School Lessons

Baptist Children's Village



women's ministry at New Orleans Seminary and wife of Seminary President Chuck Kelley. Karen Fisk, minister of music at Sylvarena Church, Wesson, will be the worship leader.

Testimonies will be presented by Evelyn Williams, a member of Good Hope Church, Hickory; Janet Rayford of Crestwood New Life Church, Jackson; and Ceal Pate, a member of First Church, Greenwood.

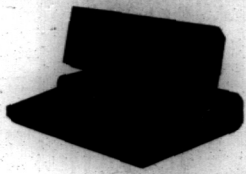
"These are solid programs in every area of the conference. We hope our south Mississippi friends — and our friends from all across the state — will turn out to support the conference. They will surely be blessed," Adkins said.

For more information, contact Adkins at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3279 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 279.

For directions to Temple Church West Campus or for a list of Hattiesburg hotels, visit www.mbc.org.

The Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

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What the world needs in 2005

When the Berlin Wall came down 15 years ago last month, the world rejoiced. The vast concrete and barbed wire scar running for miles across the German countryside, so vividly symbolic of the great divide between rival ideologies, was no more. The old Soviet Union quickly crumbled and millions of people breathed free for the first time.

Liberty had triumphed at last and a Pax Americana would soon engulf the world, we were told. Many historians even referred to the coming era as "the end of history." They were wrong.

Even though communism, the great enemy of our way of life, and its harsh dictatorships have faded away in many parts of the world, new threats have arisen in its place to test our mettle. Thus it has always been, and thus it will be. History has not ended, as we euphorically believed only a few short years ago. Quite the contrary.

The evil one, the father of confusion and strife and misery and death, would have it no other way.

Since those heady days of the late 80s and early 90s, we have witnessed genocide on a scale not seen for more than a half-century. Tribal conflicts in the African nations of Rwanda and Burundi resulted in the slaughter of millions of innocent men, women, and children. The Balkans erupted in flames over centuries-old grievances, and mass graves are still being uncovered.

An especially cruel war continues to rage in the Russian state of Chechnya, with schoolchildren and other civilians paying a high price. In the Darfur region of Sudan, massive destruction of life is occurring with government sanction. North Koreans

have resorted to eating grass to avoid starvation — that is, the North Koreans who have somehow avoided that country's Stalinist gulag system.

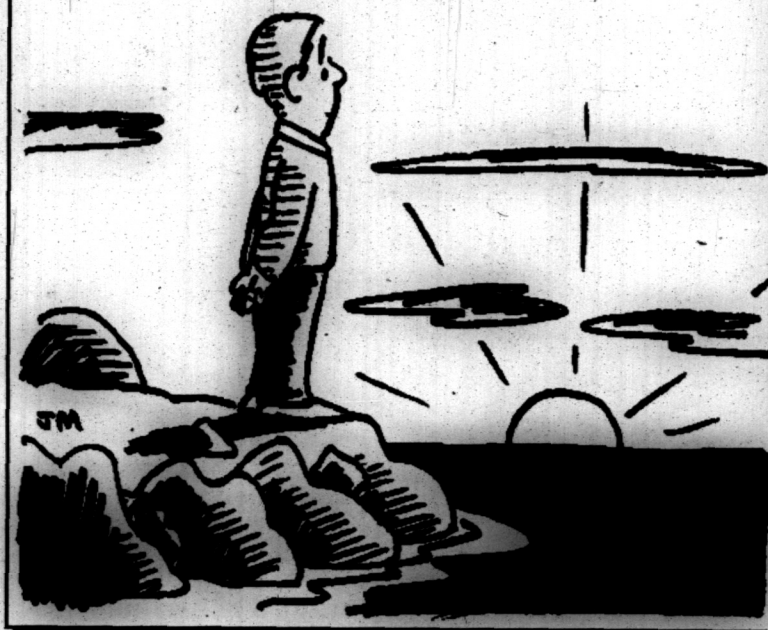
Many other areas of the world are a powder keg, waiting for the fuse to be lit. Anyone who remotely doubts the presence of the Devil and evil schemes in the workings of this world must have his/her head in the sand. He is real, and he roams among us seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

What the world needs in 2005 is what it has always needed: Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world. It just seems that the world needs Jesus more and more with every passing year.

If the world knew Jesus in 2005 like we know Jesus, the Tutsis and Hutus would join together in brotherhood. Chechens and Russians would put aside their political differences for a far greater cause. Warring factions in Sudan would seek the Heavenly Father, not more artillery. North Koreans would have hope, and all the ethnic groups in the Balkans would gather in friendship to raise one voice in praise to the Light of the world.

The only way that will ever happen is if those people know Christ. The only way those people will ever know Christ is through

**"DEAR LORD, I HAVEN'T
DONE A VERY GOOD JOB LATELY
OF TELLING YOU HOW IMPRESSED
I AM WITH YOUR ARTISTRY."**



the witness of Christians. It's that simple (Matthew 28:18-20). If not us, then who?

The historians in 1989 were right about one thing — history will end. They're just off on the date by a little bit. If 2005 is the year, may our returning Lord say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21)

GUEST OPINION:



A light dawns at Big News

By Terry Mattingly,
West Palm Beach, Fla.

One perk of covering a White House race from day one is that early bird journalists snag lots of one-on-one time with the candidate. Thus, Candy Crowley of CNN found herself sitting with John Kerry in a super-ordinary coffee shop in Dubuque, Iowa. The veteran political correspondent ordered coffee. The senator from Massachusetts ordered green tea.

The waitress, from Iowa, was puzzled. "I advised the senator that he would need to carry his own green tea in Iowa and probably several other states as well," Crowley quipped, speaking at the Forum Club of the Palm Beaches in south Florida.

Yes, it's time for "post mortems" on 2004. So far, Crowley said, the experts insist the race was decided by — take your pick — the 22% of the voters that yearned for "moral values" or the 23% that were white evangelical Christians.

Crowley grew up in the Midwest and she thinks she can tell red zones from blue zones. Democrats have cornered the green-tea crowd, she said. Republicans are winning what Capital Beltway insiders now call the "Applebee's vote." This schism may have as much to do with cappuccinos and chainsaws as with The New York Times and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Faith played a major role, but it's simplistic to say that religious people voted for

President George W. Bush and secularists for Kerry, Crowley said. The religious left has its own moral and spiritual beliefs and it will, in future elections, find ways to express them in the public square.

It also would be inaccurate to claim that evangelicals marched into voting booths and seized control. Bush won 52% of Catholic voters, facing a Catholic candidate, and 59% of the overall Protestant vote. The New York Times noted that the president, in four years, raised his share of the Jewish vote from 19% to 25%, winning two-thirds of the Orthodox Jewish votes.

The elites just didn't get it. "Somewhere along the line, all of us missed this moral values thing," Crowley said.

This will be painful for journalists to hear. It is one thing, after decades of dissecting media-bias statistics, to know that armies of religious conservatives believe American news-

rooms are packed with God-forsaken libertines. It will be harder for journalists to admit that they are blind to important stories.

Nevertheless, it's time to face the facts, said Roy Peter Clark, senior scholar at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla.

"I am now taking seriously the theory that we mainstream journalists are different from mainstream America. 'Different' is too pale a word. We are alienated. We may live in the same country, but we treat each other like aliens," he said in an essay titled, *Confessions of an Alienated Journalist*.

"The church people who embrace Bush, in spite of a bumbling war and a stumbling economy, are more than alien to me. They are invisible. ...My blind spots blot out half of America. And that makes me less of a citizen, and less of a journalist."

As a Catholic progressive, Clark said he finds it hard to hear "moral values" without thinking

of "showy piety and patriotism, with more than a dash of racism and homophobia." He knows all about Queer Eye for the Straight Guy. How come so many other Americans know what it means to be "evangelical," "charismatic," and "born again" and feel at home at church suppers?

Right now, there needs to be "more self-doubt in the journalistic system, as opposed to arrogance," said Clark, reached at his office. "We need to be able to say that we don't know it all and that we need to learn. We need to take a step back."

Most of all, Crowley said, journalists and blue-zone leaders must grasp that many parents feel threatened by the "coarsening" of American culture. They feel attacked.

"It's like they are saying, 'I was made to feel like a freak because I go to church' or 'I was made to feel like I was an idiot because I believe in God,'" she said. "They're telling us, 'I want my family safe and I want to be able to teach my children what I believe is true.' ...It's time to listen to them."

Mattingly (www.tmattingly.net) teaches at Palm Beach Atlantic University and is senior fellow for journalism at the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. He writes this weekly column for the Scripps Howard News Service. Used by permission; provided by Baptist Press.

Naylor looks like Christian to ailing Indians

BANGALORE, India (BP) — Ask people around Bangalore, India, what a Christian looks like and many would describe Rebekah Naylor, the Southern Baptist missionary surgeon who has labored at the Bangalore Baptist Hospital for the past 30 years.

Some have seen Naylor as the cool, precise medical doctor who has performed countless surgeries and other medical procedures over the years to save lives, deliver babies, and relieve suffering for thousands of people.

Others, meanwhile, know of her soft-spoken but persistent sharing of the Gospel, her training and encouragement of Indian Baptists in how to witness and plant churches. In this role she has helped bring eternal life to thousands of people and relieved the spiritual suffering experienced by many here.

For Naylor, the missionary calling and the drive to become physician were one calling. "I experienced a call to missions specifically when I was 13 years old," she said. "God spoke to me very clearly about personal involvement in foreign missions service."

Her calling intersected with an interest in medicine. "My ambition in medicine was basically to use it as an avenue to share my faith in Jesus Christ," she said, summing up in her typically precise way the vision for her life that she pursued with steadfast devotion over the fol-

lowing decades. Already she had plowed new ground; few women became physicians, much less surgeons, in the 1960s.

She arrived at Bangalore Baptist Hospital when it had been open for just six months, surrounded by a bare, 15-acre site outside the city. Anxious though she was, the Indian staff and the 12 patients present welcomed the American warmly.

"The foreign doctors were supposed to know something more than others, so they came hoping that they would find excellent care. They did find excellent care, but they also found people who really cared about them," she said.

As years passed, the city grew out to encircle the hospital compound, and the hospital also grew, from 80 beds to 160. The hospital began to help educate doctors and train Indians to become X-ray and lab technicians.

Today the hospital delivers 1,500 babies a year (an average of about four a day), treats more than 100,000 patients a year and impacts five times that many for the Gospel.

Naylor served in several key roles at the hospital, including administrator, coming to be accepted more as family than foreign staffer. She also became honorary "auntie" to hundreds and hundreds of Indian young people and children.

From its inception the hospital maintained pastoral ministry and outreach. "Its reason to exist," Naylor noted, "was to tell people about Jesus Christ."

Today, Indian Baptists point to a map of Bangalore dotted with Baptist churches, most the result of the hospital's outreach. When workers went to one community a couple of miles from the hospital years ago, there were no Christians and no churches. Within a year there were 20 baptized believers. Trinity Baptist Church is a thriving congregation that has started 18 other churches and is working in many other communities to start more.

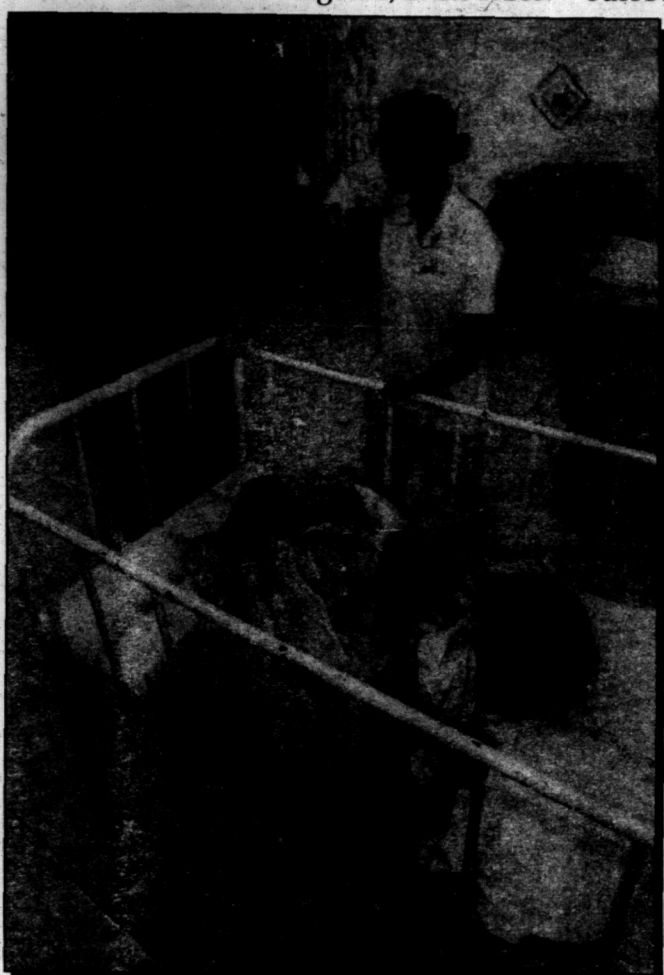
When a man died at the Baptist Hospital some years

ago, the staff presented the man's wife and family a Bible. Though they grieved, they began reading this strange book they had never seen before.

It was only years later that the hospital staff learned the family had turned to Christ and that all the children had become ministers.

Naylor has a treasury of such stories. One family she ministered to was that of Mutes Khan, a Muslim social worker and community leader. Naylor got to know the Khan family when his first wife developed breast cancer. After his wife died and he remarried, Naylor delivered his new son.

As the Baptist Hospital was looking to extend its medical care to villages outside Bangalore, Khan wanted someone else to take over a small



PHYSICIAN'S WORK — During the course of 30-plus years in India, physician Rebekah Naylor has seen the Bangalore Baptist Hospital grow from 80 beds to 160. Each year, the hospital delivers 1,500 babies and treats more than 100,000 patients while steadfastly keeping its focus on telling people about Jesus Christ. (BP photo by Mike Creswel)

By the time she arrived in India as newly appointed missionary in 1974, she had completed medical school and related training. From a comfortable home in Fort Worth, Texas, the medical and missionary newbie found herself stepping through India's poor who slept on sidewalks for want of homes.

Honeycutt dies after fall

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Roy Honeycutt, who served as president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., from 1982-93, died Dec. 21 from head injuries sustained the previous day in an accident at his home in Louisville, Ky. He was 78. Honeycutt, Southern's eighth president, guided the seminary through the initial years of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and gained recognition as a significant voice in denominational conflict. Among Honeycutt's major accomplishments at Southern were the construction of the main section of the Honeycutt Campus Center and a significant expansion of the faculty. Born Oct. 30, 1926, in Grenada, Honeycutt was a two-time graduate of Southern Seminary, receiving his Ph.D. in 1958 and his master of divinity in 1952. He served as academic dean at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City from 1971-75 and chairman of Midwestern's Old Testament department from 1963-75 prior to joining the Southern Seminary faculty as a professor of Old Testament. He served as dean of the school of theology at Southern from 1975-80 and provost at the Louisville, Ky., campus from 1976-82. After retiring as president, he was Southern's chancellor from 1994-97. Honeycutt published numerous books and articles, including a volume of the Broadman Bible Commentary in 1970. In addition to his wife, Honeycutt is survived by two children, Roy Lee and Mary Anne. Funeral services were Dec. 23 at Crescent Hill Church in Louisville.



Honeycutt

Looking back

10 years ago

Landrum Leavell II, president of New Orleans Seminary since January 1975, announces his retirement at the seminary's trustee executive meeting. Leavell will remain as interim president until a successor is found.

20 years ago

Kermit McGregor, pastor of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton, resigns that pastorate to accept the position of public relations director for the Baptist Children's Village in Jackson.

50 years ago

W. Lowery Compere, pastor of Parkview Church, Greenville, accepts the post of president of Baptist-affiliated Clarke Memorial College in Newton.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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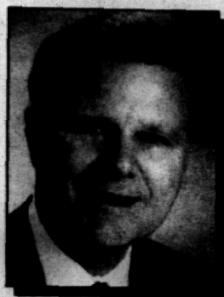
Tsunami fund established at MBCB

A special relief fund for victims of the tsunami that struck south Asia has been established at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), and tax-deductible donations are now being accepted. Checks should be made payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board with "tsunami relief" noted on the memo line, and mailed to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, ATTN: Tsunami Relief, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Fully 100% of the special relief fund will be used in the Mississippi Baptist/Southern Baptist response to the tsunami disaster.

WELCOME TO 2005

Let the band strike up and let the celebrations begin, for 2005 has arrived. I know that it is only an imaginary line, this moment called the New Year, but it seems to be so significant to most of us. It allows us to look back on the accomplishments of the time block of a year that we just expended. Sometimes it is a reminder of the resolutions that we did not achieve, the weight we did not lose, the miles we did not run, and the bad habits we did not stop. That can be depressing, but thank goodness a New Year is here and we can refocus our attention on what we actually, absolutely are going to do. Let me tell you beyond just good, although sometimes superficial resolutions, what is glorious about 2005.

Number one, God is alive in 2005! That, my friends, is a wonderful, wonderful thing to know — that as we move into this New Year our great God is going to meet us and greet us in these days just ahead. A few years ago I heard a man say, "God lives in the future." My immediate thought was, "Well, He does, but He lives in the present, and He lives in the past." As I sat there and argued with myself I came to the conclusion that is not so. God does live in the future. Do you realize that everything God is going to do, whether it is forgiving someone's sin, announcing Jesus' return to earth, or allowing us to see what He showed John in Revelation, the coming of the new heaven and new earth, is all going to take place in the future. God does not go back and rewrite the past. While we may be stuck in the past, God is waiting to welcome us into the future. Now the wonderful thing about



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

that is God will meet us as we move into the future with all of His power, love, grace, and mercy. Whatever we are going to face, God will be there to help us, enable us, and bless us. God is alive in 2005!

It thrills my soul to be able to tell you that **the church can thrive in 2005.** Your church can. I am well aware that there are people who think that the relevance of the church is all lost in days gone by. There are people who write off the significance of the church and the power of Jesus' church to touch a community and a world. I am here to echo the announcement of our Lord Jesus who tells us that is not so. The church can thrive in 2005. Jesus with all authority and power in heaven and on earth challenged even the strongholds of Satan and the structures of hell and said, "The gates of hell cannot stand against the church." I am convinced that the church still can thrive as never before. Sometimes it is not the gates of hell that stand against us, but it is our own unfaithfulness and inconsistencies. Sometimes it is our permeating unconcern and unresponsiveness that paralyzes the church.

Our Lord Jesus can overcome all of those things and can take over the heart of a church and move it forward so that it becomes not a community clubhouse where we can meet, but a hospital for broken lives with a huge emergency room where we can reach and rescue folks of every type and stripe and let them know that there is hope, new life, and a new day in Jesus Christ. The church can thrive in 2005!

I know we hear of many churches being on a plateau or in decline. There are churches holding on while in decline and they are experiencing great doses of the grace and strength of God. Some have plateaued, but they are holding their own and doing an incredible thing to stay where they are. There are other churches God wants to take beyond where they are. The resources are available, the people are everywhere, and the church needs to get on with Kingdom business. May God help your church to thrive in 2005.

Finally, I would suggest to you that it is great to be in 2005 because the **saints can strive.** As Paul described in those words in Philippians, "I press on toward the mark of the prize of the high

calling of God in Christ Jesus." Whatever else is going on in the world, you and I can take inventory of our lives and see how God wants us to grow, to strive, to become more like Him, and to achieve things that we have never before attempted. God wants to help us and He wants us to strive in 2005.

Just think about it for a moment and let God's spirit come and turn His spotlight on in your own heart and help you to see the areas where you can strive. How is your prayer life? What does your stewardship life look like? How often do you share your own faith with someone? How faithful are you in attending God's house? Are you a part of a Bible study group, not just to get your blessing each week but to touch the lives of others and be a blessing to them? How is your devotional life? Have you determined to carve out a time each day for you to spend some special time with the Lord letting His Word touch your heart and letting your needs touch His? How is your attitude? Is it being shaped more into a Christ-like shape or is it stuck in a kind of selfish mode? Could it be that this year 2005 is the year for you to strive to be not just a different person but to be a Christ-like person in more ways than you have ever considered? Welcome to 2005! It is a great year not only to be different but also to make a difference in this world.

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Ministry, MBCB • Dr. Jim Futral Executive Director, MBCB •
Jim Phillips - Pastor & Professional Bass Fisherman • Danny Singleton -
Minister of Pastoral Care & Men's Ministry, FBC, Woodstock, Georgia •
Sid Woodruff - Men's Ministry Specialist, LifeWay

Registration deadline for Wild Game Supper: January 24

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Be Pure

Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 6:9-11, 13b-20

By Frances C. Graham

When thinking of the human sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ dying on the cross to save mankind from sin, one realizes that He gave everything. There were no reserves held back.

When we come to believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are giving our soul to Him and in so doing we will experience eternity with our heavenly Father.

Wait there is more! As we find in Romans 12:1 "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God," Paul gives a gentle command [urge] that can only be obeyed by "brothers", those who already belong to the family of God. In short, we must first offer God our souls then we

must present Him our bodies which will become a living and holy sacrifice. We are also instructed to not be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we may discern what is good, pleasing and the perfect will of God. (12:2) Our supreme act is to serve God with all our being (soul, body and mind) first and foremost wholly and continually in worship.

God already owns our souls through His saving grace. Now we are urged to give Him our bodies which demonstrate our life as human beings. As a human being, we have flesh which in turn is a precursor for our sins.

Paul confesses long after he was saved, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the



Graham

inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:22-23)

Paul was explaining that the soul, which has been redeemed, must reside in the body of flesh that is the place that can readily be given to sinful thoughts and longings. We are warned that we are tempted and lured to do evil when we allow the fleshly mind to succumb to the impulses of sin and unrighteousness. If we allow our unredeemed bodies to rule, then we will find ourselves thwarted with sinful desires, emotional depression and spiritual doubts.

Our living sacrifice, the body, is to be set apart for the special purpose of being holy. It is holy because we are giving it to God continually. Paul warned, "Therefore do not let

sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts." (Romans 6:12)

In keeping with Jesus' complete sacrifice to save us from sin and death, we are to give our souls and then our bodies to God without any reserves. We are to be a holy sacrifice given in worship and honor to our God.

Paul's purpose in I Corinthians 6:9-11 is not to give a list of sins that indicates one has lost his salvation but rather to give a list of sins typically committed by the unsaved. In this case, the unsaved are unrighteous, unjustified and they will not inherit the kingdom of God because they are not right with God.

Later in the same chapter (6:13b), Paul tells us that as Christians we are to acknowledge that the body is an instrument of the Lord for His use and glory when he said "The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body."

If you are a Christian, your body is not your own. The

Christian no longer controls ownership because "we have been bought with a price." (6:20) A Christian's body is God's temple where the sole purpose of it is to glorify God.

Paul's description of Christians is those "who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3) As a Christian, we are called "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (the one who gave everything for us).

Christ, the Messiah, has called us out of darkness into His holy light. He has justified and sanctified us as royal priest, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. (1 Peter 2:5,9) We are to offer our all to God.

Our supreme calling requires all of our being (our soul, body and mind) to serve God foremost in worship and in so doing, we will not venture into impure living.

Graham is a member of Adaton Church, Starkville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

What About Pride?

Luke 18:9-14, 18-23

By Neil Gant

Prior to this parable, Jesus instructed His disciples about the need for persistent prayer. As His children we are to live in or always be in a spirit of prayer. The first part of the lesson text reveals to us the type of spirit we are to express in prayer — the spirit of humility. We are coming before the awesome God of the universe. Though we are to come boldly, we are not to come brashly. The encounter with the rich young ruler shows how pride is a great barrier in the human heart to the Gospel.

GOODNESS AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS PRIDE, LUKE 18:9-12

Jesus spoke this parable to show the futility of trusting in oneself as righteous apart from God and thinking that others

are not. Jesus denounces the sin of self-righteousness. We are all naturally self-righteous. It is a disease we inherited from Adam. We all war with the burly beast of self-importance and self-righteousness. The Pharisee boldly prayed in the Temple and clearly expressed how great I am. The prayer was nothing more than a bold declaration of self-importance. When a person thinks so highly of himself or herself, praying about accomplishments and goodness is not difficult. He pointed out how good he was compared to other people. From his perspective, he went above and beyond the call of duty. He was not an extortionist, not unjust, not an adulterer, he fasted twice in each week, and tithed all he possessed. The most important



Gant

aspect of his life was that he was not like the tax collector. What is so telling about this prayer is not what it included but what it excluded. There is not one mention of God's goodness and mercy that allowed the man to be able to do all that he did. He never once confessed any sin or shortcoming. He does not say that he has done anything wrong. If he really sensed the presence of God, he would have fallen on his face and cried out confessing his own unworthiness.

FORGIVENESS AND HONEST CONFESSION, LUKE 18:13-14

Note the difference between the Pharisee and the Publican. The publican had his head down and beat on his breast. He sensed his unworthiness before God. He brought a petition before God. He did not list accomplishments. He asked God to do something for him that he could not do for himself. He prayed a personal prayer. He did not mention

anything about anyone else. He prayed God be merciful to me. He called himself a sinner. He prayed from his heart and not his head. He felt deeply his need of mercy and expressed it in prayer. The publican goes home justified. He goes home a changed man. The Pharisee goes home and has nothing. He might as well never gone to the Temple. There is a grave danger for those who have religion and have never known the Lord Jesus Christ. In this world pride brings exaltation, but in God's kingdom humility brings exaltation.

RICHES AND SELFISH PRIDE, LUKE 18:18-23

Many people have fallen under the mistaken notion that being good is all that is necessary for heaven. The young man in this text thought that as well. Notice what he did. He came to the right person. He came to Jesus. He came to the only person who could meet his deepest need and answer his most probing question. He asked the right question. He wanted to know about eternal life. That is the right

question. All other knowledge pales in comparison to the truth concerning eternal life. He received the right answer. Jesus told the young man plainly who He was, and yet the man did not even begin to see his utter sinfulness in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. The commandments that Jesus mentioned all deal with human relationships. The man claimed he had kept them all. Jesus pointed out his need of repentance and faith by directing him to fulfill the command of verse twenty-two. Jesus knew the young ruler's heart. He knew that the one command not mentioned was the one that commanded his heart. He was selfishly materialistic. He did the wrong thing. He went away sorrowful. Jesus had called on him to repent of his sin of materialism and trust Him. He loved his money and did not want anything to take its place. Who then can be saved? Those who repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. What seems impossible to men is possible with God.

Gant is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Gore Springs.

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A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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MEMORIAL CORRECTION:

Mary Nell Beall
James & Martha Usry

Bibliocipher

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HRVU PNHZ QYI PYOAX,
RTA HIOT HY HZU EYOA:
XRQ ITHY ZNG, HRVU
RPRQ REE NTNKINHQ,
RTA OUBUNFU IX DORB-
NYIXEQ: XY PNEE PU
OUTAUO HZU BREFUX
YC YIO ENJX.

ZYXUR CYIOHUUT: HPY

Clue: I = U

Have fun with cryptography
and exercise your Bible
knowledge. A King James
Version Bible verse has been
encoded by letter substitution.
The same letter is substituted
throughout the puzzle. Solve
by trial and error. Answer to
last week's puzzle:
Isaiah 39:8

MS POSITIONS

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ground floor in our new building.

Famed atheist takes another look at God

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Antony Flew, a legendary British philosopher and atheist, has changed his mind about the existence of God in light of recent scientific evidence.

Flew — a prolific author who has argued against the existence of God and the claims of Christianity for more than 50 years — first revealed his change of mind in a video of a discussion with several others at New York University organized by the Institute for Metascientific Research. The video, released in December, is titled, *Has Science Discovered God?*

Flew said he is now best described as a deist, a person who believes God created the universe but is not actively involved in people's lives today.

"I don't believe in the God of any revelatory system, although I am open to that," Flew said in an interview for the winter 2005 edition of *Philosophia Christi*, the journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society. "But it seems to me that the case for ... [a] God who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence is now much stronger than it ever was before."

Flew, age 81, regularly attended the Socratic Club, a weekly religious forum led by

famed Christian apologist C.S. Lewis while he attended college at Oxford. Flew proclaimed the lack of evidence for God while teaching at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, and Reading universities

in Britain. He also published numerous books and articles denouncing belief in God.

Flew credits his newfound belief in God to arguments from design such as those espoused by the intelligent design (ID) movement. ID argues that the universe operates in such a way that it points to the existence of an intelligent creator.

"I think that the most impressive arguments for God's existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries," Flew said. "... I think the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it."

Although many atheists appeal to naturalistic evolution as a method by which the world could have come into existence apart from God, Charles Darwin himself acknowledged that the process of evolution requires a creator to start the process, Flew said.

"Darwin himself, in the fourteenth chapter of *The Origin of Species*, pointed out that his whole argument began with a being which already possessed

reproductive powers," Flew said. "This is the creature the evolution of which a truly comprehensive theory of evolution must give some account. Darwin himself was well aware that he had not produced such an account."

While Flew said he does not believe in a God who is active in the lives of humans, he is "open to" the possibility of divine revelation. He also believes that Christians are intellectually justified in holding to their religion and that the resurrection of Jesus has more evidential support than any other reported miracle in history.

"The evidence for the resurrection is better than for claimed miracles in any other religion," Flew said. "It's outstandingly different in quality and quantity, I think, from the evidence offered for the occurrence of most other supposedly miraculous events."

Despite his belief in the existence of God, Flew said it is unlikely that he will ever become a Christian. The major evidence against the God of Christianity is the problem of evil, Flew said.

The problem of evil refers to the apparent tension between the existence of a good God and the presence of evil in the world.

"The problem of evil is a problem... for Christians," Flew said. "The thesis that the universe was created and is sustained by a Being of infinite power and goodness is flatly incompatible with the occurrence of massive undeniable and undeniable evils in that universe."

Flew also argues that God does not have "any preferences... about or any intentions concerning human behavior or about the eternal destinies of human beings."

Although he does not accept Christianity, Flew emphatically denies the possibility that he would ever become a follower of Islam, citing Islam's commitment to conquer all of its opponents.

"I would never regard Islam with anything but horror and fear because it is fundamentally committed to conquering the world for Islam," Flew said.



Flew

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